

## COMMISSION POLICY GUIDELINES FOR SPHERES OF INFLUENCE

The approaches and/or methods listed below are policies adopted by San Bernardino LAFCO. The policies guide the Commission's review in its determination of spheres of influence, periodic reviews and/or updates, and any amendments of those sphere boundaries.

### Concurrent Sphere Reviews:

The Commission may include additional agencies as part of its review of a sphere of influence proposal. In considering the sphere of influence of a community, the Commission will concurrently evaluate all agencies serving that community, and as a policy guideline, it will need to establish a single, coterminous sphere for all such agencies.

### Community-by-Community Approach:

As previously mentioned, the community-by-community approach is a guide used to establish spheres of influence. The idea was adopted by San Bernardino LAFCO prior to the mandate for spheres of influence, and includes the practice of looking at a total area, which could be considered a community, and defining its boundaries. This approach also considers the existence of inter-related economic, environmental, geographic, and social interests, and attempts to harmonize the conflicting plans and services of the various service entities. Under this approach, an attempt is made to keep the spheres of influence of the various service districts as nearly the same as possible.

### Coterminous Boundaries:

The Commission may establish a sphere of influence which is coterminous with existing city/district boundaries when it is not feasible for the public agency to expand beyond its present boundaries. However, as outlined in state law, a sphere of influence must be established for each city and district, regardless whether the sphere boundary is the same as the city or district boundary.

### Environmental Review for a Sphere:

A sphere of influence proposal requires review of the environmental aspects of the proposed sphere. The environmental review process is a requirement outlined in the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) that applies to the review of sphere of influence proposals. In compliance with CEQA and the State CEQA Guidelines, San Bernardino LAFCO adopted its own

Guidelines and Policies Implementing CEQA on June 22, 1990 with a subsequent amendment adopted on January 18, 1995. The Commission's Guidelines and Policies tailor the general provisions of CEQA to LAFCO's specific functions as both a "Responsible" and a "Lead" agency. The Guidelines and Policies also provide specific procedures used by San Bernardino LAFCO to implement CEQA.

Each sphere of influence proposal involving establishment, expansion, reduction, or submitted as part of the annexation proposal, must be reviewed by the Commission's environmental consultant. As a requirement of LAFCO's review, the environmental assessment must be completed prior to the Commission's review of the item.

#### Exclusion of Territory:

Under certain circumstances, a sphere of influence may exclude portions of the existing boundaries of a city or district. The Commission encourages reorganization and special studies in this situation to make final determination of which city or district should serve.

For example, certain portions of the City of San Bernardino are surrounded on three sides by the City of Highland, as there are certain portions of the City of Highland that are surrounded on three sides by the City of San Bernardino. In these situations, a sphere of influence study may be initiated to determine which public agency could better serve the area of review. The sphere of influence study would include a review of the possibility of excluding territory from one jurisdiction and the placement of the same territory in another jurisdiction's sphere of influence. The purpose of excluding territory would be an attempt to straighten irregular boundaries, and eliminate confusion arising from multiple jurisdictions.

#### Modification of a Sphere Review Area:

During the review of a sphere of influence proposal, the Commission may modify the area of review by expanding or reducing the area of review. The expansion or reduction of a sphere can be for several reasons, such as to include areas that may be better served by a public agency, or exclude areas that may be better served by another public agency.

#### Periodic Review/Update of a Sphere:

As a function of its duties and responsibilities, LAFCO is required to periodically review and/or update spheres of influence. Government Code Section 56425 requires the Commission to review and update, if necessary, all spheres of influence for cities and special districts at least once every five years.

The periodic sphere review does not preclude a public agency (city or district), or an individual from initiating a sphere proposal. The purpose of the periodic sphere review plan is to keep abreast of changes occurring within the public agencies under the jurisdiction of LAFCO.

Requirement for a Sphere Review in Relationship to Annexation:

State law precludes the Commission from approving annexation proposals lying outside of current sphere of influence boundaries for the affected city or district. If an annexation proposal lies outside the sphere of influence of a city or district, the annexation proposal must also include a sphere review. The joint sphere and annexation review is to maintain consistency in city or district boundaries and their sphere boundaries, for the extension and provision of services as it relates to proposed annexation sites.

Responsibility/Obligation for a Sphere Area:

When a sphere of influence is assigned, a city or district is required to commence long range land use and service planning activities, thereby enabling it to respond to any annexation requests it might receive from landowners or residents within the sphere. By accepting a sphere of influence, a city or district agrees to plan for the provision of services.

Urban Development within a City Sphere:

LAFCO takes the position that any new urban development which occurs within a city sphere of influence should take place as close to the city's urban area as possible. This position is emphasized for two reasons: First, so that contiguous areas may easily be annexed to the city; and secondly, so that the new urban area can be served by reasonable extension of the city's already developed municipal services.